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Wanching Chang

Department of Nutrition, Hospitality, and Retailing, Texas Tech University

Jingxue (Jessica) Yuan PhD

Department of Nutrition, Hospitality, and Retailing, Texas Tech University

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Tourists' Characteristics and Motivations in Attending Festivals and Events: A Study in Texas

Wanching Chang, Department of Nutrition, Hospitality, and Retailing
Texas Tech University, Texas USA

Jingxue (Jessica) Yuan, Ph.D. Department of Nutrition, Hospitality, and Retailing
Texas Tech University, Texas USA

ABSTRACT

Food is an important component of the attractiveness, an image of a destination in the tourism sector. Thus, it can be a major motivation factor for visitors. Considering the importance of implementing effective market strategy to promote a regional festival, it is necessary to understand visitors' motivations to attend the festival. The objectives of this study were to (1) identify the underlying dimensions of motivations for visitors attending the food festival, using a factor analysis and (2) examine if socio-demographic characteristics varied with their motivations for festival attendance. A two page survey instrument was developed to explore visitors' motivations as well as characteristics. A set of 35 motivation items was initially generated from a review of event-festival-specific research. Results indicate that six motivational dimensions (wine, escape/event novelty, food, known-group socialization, external socialization and art) identified using factor analysis. The most important reason for respondents to attend the festival is for fun ($x = 5.85$), followed by getting out in the open air ($x = 5.75$). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) reveals that there are significant differences between some demographic variables based on the delineated motivations. The age and the educational levels of respondents have significant differences on the dimensions of wine and escape/event novelty. Female respondents rate food as more important factor than the male respondents do. Explicit discussion regarding the implications of these findings is included.

Key Words: Festival; Visitors' motivation; Factor Analysis; ANOVA

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, food has been increasingly recognized by its social and cultural significance. It can be an expressive form of a regional culture as well as the regional environment. The consumption of food becomes an integral part of tourist experience and is therefore an important component of tourism (Hall and Mitchell, 2000).

Festivals can be regarded as the systematic development and marketing of special events as tourist attractions and as image-builders for destinations (Getz, 1988). Heenan (1978) asserted

that festivals can be essentially community-based, focused on 'local theme and values', largely aimed at attracting both outside and local visitors. Uysal, Gahan, & Martin (1993) stated that festivals are embedded in the construct of special event, which reflect the cultural resources of an area and are organized to deliver a positive image of a place. With the preceding perspectives, food festivals have potential to reinforce local food economics, encourage the conservation of food and biodiversity, and help sustain local identities (Hall et al., 2003).

The primary goal of this study was to investigate empirically visitors' motivations for attending a regional food festival by examining a festival in the state of Texas. The specific objectives of this study were to (1) identify the underlying dimensions of motivations for visitors attending the food festival, using a factor analysis and (2) examine if socio-demographic characteristics varied with their motivations for festival attendance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Festival motivations

Getz (1991) defined festival as "A festival is a public, themed celebration" (p.54). Festivals and special events are the cultural resources of an area that make possible the successful hosting of attendees. As illustrated by Uysal et al. (1993), festivals are embedded in the construct of special event, which reflect the cultural resources of an area and are organized to deliver a positive image of a place. Festivals vary greatly in terms of place, objectives, program contents and purposes (Kim et al, 2002). Heenan (1978) noted that festivals can be essentially community-based, focused on 'local theme and values', largely aimed at attracting both outside and local visitors.

The growing popularity of traveling to attend festivals and events has prompted researchers to examine this form of tourism. A majority of festival and event studies can be found to examine motivations from the attendee's point of view. In essence, to develop an effective marketing strategy for a festival and special event, it is paramount for organizers to understand the motivation factors that lead to the visitors' decision to attend a festival. As Fodness (1994) pointed out, motivations represent the major driving power in explaining human behavior and represent the personal psychological components that are likely to be satisfied through tourism activities.

Among the most recent research studying visitors' motivations to attend festivals, Uysal et al. (1993) examined visitors' motivations for attending a Corn Festival in South Carolina. The factor analysis of twenty-four motivation items resulted in five factor groupings. The factors were labeled as (1) escape; (2) excitement and thrills; (3) event novelty; (4) socialization; and (5) family togetherness. Mohr et al. (1993) explored underlying motivations for first-time and repeat festival visitors attending a hot air balloon festival in South Carolina. Twenty-three motivational

items were factor analyzed and delineated five similar dimensions as defined by Uysal et al.(1993). The most importance factor to repeat visitors is ‘excitement’, and they showed low interest in ‘event novelty’. Formica and Uysal (1996) empirically explored the motivational differences between residents and nonresidents in attending an international Jazz Festival in Italy. The results recognized that local visitors tended to more driven by ‘socialization’ factor, while nonresidents were most interested in ‘entertainment’ activities. Backman et al. (1995) analyzed twelve motivational items to examine visitors’ motivations for attending festivals, special events or exhibitions, and resulted in five motivational factors. The differences in motivational factors were tested based on demographic variables and some of them were reported to be statistically different.

A review of findings from these festival-specific studies on motives reveals some key dimensions of motivations, although the order and the components of factors vary depending upon the type or theme of festivals. Most festival research factor analyzed twenty-three to twenty-six motivation items and resulted in five to six factor groupings. As noted, motivations do differ to varying degrees within specific festival settings (Yuan et al., 2005). These key dimensions include ‘socialization’, ‘family togetherness’, ‘event novelty’, ‘escape’, and ‘excitement/thrills’.

METHODS

Study site

A regional festival, Texas Style Wine, Art, and Food Festival, was selected for this study to investigate the attendees’ motivations. The Old Town SpringFest was a 2-day event of Texas foods, wines and arts. The festival organizer set up a ‘Go Texan Food Vendor’ area where participants could taste, sample, and purchase food products made in the Texas. A wonderful variety of foods would be available from local restaurants as well as specialty vendors from all over Texas. Nonstop musical entertainment was also presented throughout the day in addition to the display and sale of regional wines and food. The festival is in its 8^h year, the annually average attendees of the festival are over 100,000 people.

Survey instrument and sampling

A two page survey instrument was developed to explore demographics as well as visitors’ motivational. One major component of the survey was designed to examine visitors’ motivations in attending the food festival. A set of 35 motivation items was initially generated from a review of event-festival-specific research (Uysal et al.,1993; Backman et al., 1995; Mohr et al.,1993; Formica & Uysal, 1996; Scott, 1996) pertaining to visitors’ motivations and they were considered to be the most appropriate for measuring visitors’ motivations for attending the Old Town SpringFest. The motivation section of the questionnaire has 35 items were measured on a

Likert-type scale; Seven response categories were provided where 1 meant “not at all important” and 7 meant “very important” to indicate the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed on the importance of each item in regard to why they attended the festival. Questions on festival attendees’ demographics were also incorporated in the questionnaire to better characterize and profile the visitors’ segmentations.

A systematic sample of subjects was obtained from all visitors who attended the Old Town SpringFest between 11am and 6 pm on March 17th and 18th, 2006. Interviewers were stationed at two different sites to intercept the passing visitors. To access a systematic sample of visitors, interviewers took every x th person passing a particular fixed line. Using an on-site intercept methodology procedure, visitors were approached while entering or exiting the festival. They were asked to complete the self-administered questionnaire. If visitors agreed to participate, they were given a Chinese knot as an incentive for their participations. A total of 134 questionnaires had been collected during the festival. Of these, 5 were incomplete and thus excluded from the data analysis.

Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted in three stages. First, descriptive statistics were generated for all demographic variables, and means were calculated for the responses to each of the motivation items. Second, the thirty-five motivation items were factor analyzed using the principal component method and varimax rotation procedure to delineate the underlying dimensions of motivation associated with the Old Town SpringFest. The study also utilized Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to investigate further if there is difference between visitors’ socio-demographic variables (i.e., age, marital status, gender, education, and income) and the delineated motivational factors identified from the factor analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristics of respondents to the Old Town SpringFest are presented in Table 1. Respondents to this festival were disproportionately from Taxes State (90.8%). The percentages of male and female respondents were 28.5% and 67.7%, respectively. The marital statuses of 70% respondents were married. Nevertheless, the festival attracted more old people than young people, as 34.8% of them were over 50 years of age. Nearly 47% had completed their education at some degree or below. Respondents maintained a high level of income, with over 60% claiming an annual income of \$40,000 or more.

Table 1.
Descriptive Profile of Respondents (n = 129)

Variable	Frequency	%
Live in		
Texas	118	90.8
Out of Texas	12	9.2
Gender		
Male	37	28.5
Female	88	67.7
Marital Status		
Single	33	25.4
Married	90	69.2
Other	1	0.8
Age		
Under 21 years old	13	9.6
21-29 years old	12	8.9
31-39 years old	17	12.6
41-49 years old	32	23.7
50 years and over	47	34.8
Education		
High School	29	22.3
Some College	32	24.6
Associate Degree	19	14.6
Bachelor Degree	19	14.6
Graduate Degree	25	19.2
Income		
Less than \$20,000	14	10.8
\$20,001-\$40,000	17	12.3
\$40,001-\$60,000	22	16.9
\$60,001-\$80,000	17	13.1
More than \$80,000	42	32.3

Note. Number of case under frequency does not include missing observations.

The mean importance scores for the individual motivation items are presented in Table 2. The majority of the motivation items had a mean score of five or higher, suggesting that these included motivations are of great importance in attending a festival. The most important reason for respondents to attend the festival was for fun ($x = 5.85$), followed by getting out in the open air ($x = 5.75$). The festival sound like fun was another popular reason to be at the festival ($x = 5.61$). The next two most important reasons were to see and do variety of things ($x = 5.56$) and change the daily routine ($x = 5.55$).

Table 2.

Top Five Food Festival Motivation (n = 129)

Rank	Motivation	Mean	Std dev.
1	For fun	5.85	1.48
2	To get out in the open air	5.75	1.39
3	Because I heard about the festival and it sounded like fun	5.61	1.53
4	For the variety of things to see and do	5.56	1.43
5	To have a change from my daily routine	5.55	1.54

Note. Respondents utilized a seven-point Likert type scale to indicate the importance of each motivation factor for attending the Old Town SpringFest (1=not at all important, 7=very important).

Delineated Motivation Factors

The results of factor analyzing the twenty-seven motivation items are presented in Table 3. A reliability coefficient was computed for each factor to estimate the reliability of each scale. All factors had relatively high reliability coefficients ranging from 0.69 to 0.95. Labeling factors were based on the appropriateness of the individual items under each factor grouping. The factors were labeled as (1) Wine (2) Escape and Event Novelty (3) Food (4) Known-group Socialization (5) External Socialization (6) Art.

Table 3.

Factor Analysis Results of the Motivation Items at the Food Festival (n = 129)

Subscales	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Reliability coefficient
Wine		5.2726	19.5282	0.9543
To sample local wines	0.9131			
To get familiar with Texas wines	0.8937			
To experience local wineries	0.8785			
To purchase local wines	0.8697			
To increase my wine knowledge	0.8637			
To exchange ideas with the winemakers	0.7519			
Escape/Event Novelty		4.1137	15.2359	0.8912
To go out in the open air	0.8063			
For rest and relaxation	0.8034			
To have a change from my daily routine	0.7621			
For the variety of things to see and do	0.7468			
To enjoy the festival mood	0.5989			
For fun	0.5145			
To satisfy my curiosity	0.5016			

Table 3.

Factor Analysis Results of the Motivation Items at the Food Festival (continue)

Food		3.3074	12.2498	0.8808
For food tasting	0.8209			
To sample Texas food products	0.7927			
To increase my knowledge in food	0.7135			
To explore new restaurants	0.6686			
To purchase food	0.6526			
Known-Group Socialization		2.9764	11.0238	0.7765
To be with my friends	0.8266			
To be with people who enjoy the same things I do	0.6217			
To bring the family together more	0.5982			
Because I could do things with my companions	0.5684			
To meet people with same interests	0.4349			
External socialization		2.1337	7.9025	0.6954
To observe the other people attending the festival	0.7636			
Because I heard about the festival and it sounded like fun	0.7087			
Art		1.9073	7.0640	0.7293
To see the art show	0.8007			
To purchase arts and crafts	0.6272			
Total			73.0041	0.9380

The first dimension was labeled as ‘wine’ which consisted of six items, which explained 19.5 % of the total variance with a coefficient alpha of 0.95. The second dimension was labeled as ‘escape and event novelty’ which consisted of seven items, which accounted for 15.2 % of the variance with a coefficient alpha of 0.89. The third dimension ‘food’, which explained 12.2% of the total variance with a coefficient alpha of 0.88, consisted of five items, The fourth dimension was label as ‘known-group socialization’ which consisted of five items, which explained 11.03 % of the total variance and achieved a coefficient alpha of 0.78. ‘external socialization’ was the label given the fifth dimension, comprised of two items, which explained 7.9% of the total variance and obtained a coefficient alpha of 0.69. The last dimension ‘Art’ consisted of two items, which explained 7% of the total variance and had a coefficient alpha of 0.73. Six factors explaining 73 % of the total variance. To verify reliability within factors, Cronbach’s alpha was used. The total Cronbach’s alpha value in this study achieved an entire scale of 0.93, which indicated that the model was internally reliable.

The Relationship between Motivation Factors and Visitors' Demographics

The second objective this study is to examine if socio-demographic characteristics varied with their motivations for festival attendance. The results of the ANOVA and *post hoc* tests on the socio-demographic variables are presented in the Table 4. The age and the educational levels of respondents had a significant difference on the dimensions of wine and escape/event novelty, with older respondents indicating an increased desire to seek entertainment and relaxation to escape from their daily routine. The respondents with bachelor degree or higher perceived attending a festival as an important way, compared to those without bachelor degree, to escape and release their stresses. Gender of the respondents had significant effects on the food dimension. Female respondents rated food as more important factor than did the male respondents. Their responses supported the view that women are essential to the food market, where they are the major consumers and purchasers. Income levels had a significant influence on four motivation factors: wine, escape/event novelty, external socialization, and art. Respondents with annual income higher than \$40,000 perceived both the wine and escape/event novelty factor as being of more important than those with incomes lower than \$40,000. Those with incomes of less than \$20,000 rated the external socialization motivation factor of greater importance than those earning between \$20,001 and \$40,000. The lower income group had a greater desire to meet new people and build new relationships as well as enjoy the art by attending the festival than did the slightly higher income groups.

Table 4.

Variation in Motivation Factors by Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n = 129)

Independent variables	Dependent variables					
	Wine	Escape/Event Novelty	Food	Known-Group Socialization	External socialization	Art
Age						
Under 21	1.5303 ^a	4.3117 ^a	4.1818	4.1818	3.6364	2.9091 ^a
21-29	3.8214 ^b	5.8571 ^b	4.6857	4.8571	4.9286	4.5000
30-39	3.7549 ^b	5.6807 ^b	4.3647	5.1529	4.8824	4.0294
40-49	4.3594 ^b	5.6384 ^b	4.4625	5.0875	5.0938	4.4844 ^b
50 years and older	4.0213 ^b	5.6292 ^b	4.2638	4.9191	4.6170	4.2979
F-test	5.5260*	4.0262*	0.2779	1.1987	1.9065	2.3027
Marital Status						
Single	3.6263	5.2944	4.5818	4.8788	4.7273	4.1515
Married	3.8407	5.6651	4.2289	4.9422	4.6444	4.1889
T-test	-0.5522	-1.6144	1.1491	-0.2454	0.2541	-0.1142
Gender						
Male	3.6396	5.4479	3.9297a	4.7405	4.8784	3.8108
Female	3.8826	5.6169	4.5136b	5.0273	4.6193	4.3636

T-test	-0.6501	-0.7614	-2.0042*	-1.1528	0.8265	-1.7863
Education						
High School	2.7184 ^a	5.1133 ^a	4.1655	4.7586	4.3448	3.6552
Some college	4.2604 ^b	5.8036	4.5875	5.3063	4.9844	4.4688
Associate degree	3.8596	5.3083	4.4316	4.7789	4.8684	4.7632
Bachelor degree	4.0789	6.0376 ^b	4.6947	5.0105	4.9737	4.2368
Graduate degree	4.3067 ^b	5.5829	3.9440	4.7600	4.5000	4.0400
F-test	3.6254*	2.7301*	1.0246	1.0196	0.9077	1.7619
Income						
Less than						
\$20,000	2.3929 ^a	4.6224 ^a	4.1857	4.3714	3.7143 ^a	3.2500 ^a
\$20,001-\$40,000	4.7917 ^b	5.7946 ^b	5.0625	5.4125	5.5000 ^b	4.8438 ^b
\$40,001-\$60,000	3.7727	5.5260	4.3636	4.9545	4.5000	4.3182
\$60,001-\$80,000	4.3922 ^b	6.0756 ^b	4.7765	5.3412	5.0588	4.7647
More than	3.8492 ^b	5.5816 ^b	4.1619	4.7571	4.7262	4.0119
\$80,000	3.7565*	3.5646*	1.3999	1.9299	2.7382*	2.7463*
F-test						

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level

^{ab} The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$ level in *post hoc* tests.

CONCLUSIONS

Segmenting festival markets and understanding their characteristics based on motivations will be important for successful festival and event managers in the future (Lee et al., 2004). The results revealed that people were drawn to festival due to multiple motivations. As expected the motivation dimensions uncovered in this study were similar with previous studies which have been done on festival attendees' motivations. Six motivation dimensions (wine, escape/event novelty, food, known-group socialization, external socialization and art) were identified by using factor analysis. The dimension factors of escape/event novelty, known-group socialization, and external socialization have reflected the notion of Getz (1997), who claimed that festival attendees were primarily seeking to fulfill generic needs for a leisure experience. Festival goers may regard these social factors as the chance to be with friends or family members and as a chance to escape their mundane daily lives. In other words, visitors wanted the opportunity to be entertained in a festival atmosphere, while having a day out in an urban setting.

Another important findings in this study explored that the rest of motivation factors (wine, food, and art) exactly reflected the uniqueness and themes of the festival. It provides greater support of Scott's (1996) notion that the festival theme had a stronger influence on visitors' reported motivation. The theme unifies a festival. Yuan et al. (2005) stated, festival visitors' motives stemmed from the inherent uniqueness of the festival and targeted benefits related to the theme. The realization of a theme is a function of coherent programming and image-making (Korza and Magie, 1989). In this case, attendees who were highly interested in food perceived the festival is an ideal venue to sample and buy local food. This is where the organizers may

accentuate the unique theme to meet the needs of the festival goers and to promote the regional identity in the long term.

The second objective of this study was to examine whether socio-demographic characteristics varied with their motivations for attending festival. The results of the ANOVA and post hoc tests showed that there are significant differences in the motivational factors among attendees based on demographic characteristics. In conclusion, the festival atmosphere attracted successfully to a large group of attendees who were motivated by the prospect of enjoying a fun experience. the festival seekers group searched for a more diversified or integrated experience incorporating wine, food, environment, setting, learning, and cultural aspects (Yuan et al. 2005). The festival provided an ideal venue for them to relax and have fun.

Along with the findings of study, some limitations are obvious. One limitation is tied to the development of the motivation factors. These common motivation factors came out from earlier findings of similar studies. However, they were pre-selected and the lists actually were not comprehensive. Six dimensions analyzed by this study may in part reflect the prominence motives of the specific type of festival. The importance and character of motivation factors should vary from festival respectively. Furthermore, motivation can be stressed as important preconditions for attitudinal and behavioral change (Moorman & Matulich, 1993). Therefore, this study suggested that a preliminary qualitative approach can be taken to explore the relationship between festival motivation and attitude and behavioral intentions.

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